

THE DESCRIPTION OF THE WORLD^s MURDER & GOLDEN TEETH

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the poison; so that the government has found for this wickedness of these scoundrels a remedy of this kind, and it is a thing very often tried. Moreover I tell you another very shameful and wicked thing which they did before the great Kaan conquered them. For this people had this custom and opinion, that if it were to happen that some stranger, a handsome man and a gentle or whoever else it might be who had a good shadow and good influence and valour, came to lodge in the house of one of these of this province, they killed him by night either by poison or by other thing so that he died. And do not understand that they did it to take money from him, nor for any hatred which they had against him, but they did it that the soul of that noble stranger might not leave the house, because they said that the good shadow and the good grace that he had and the good fortune of his knowledge and his soul stayed in his house where he died, and from this they had good luck, and that by the staying of that soul in the house he kept all their things safe and sound with great happiness. And therefore each one of those citizens could count himself blest when they could get the soul of some person; and the more noble and of better appearance, so much the more blest they reckoned themselves and so much the more happy in all their doings. And for this reason they killed enough of them before the great Kaan conquered them. But after Cublai the great Kaan conquers them, which is about thirty-five years, he took away that cursed custom from them, so that by reason of the great punishment which has been inflicted they do not make this evil happening nor this bad custom; and that is for fear of the great lord who does not let them do it at all, [but] wholly extirpated this impious folly from that land. Now we have told you of this province and we will tell you below of another country so as you shall be able to hear.

HERE HE TELLS US OF THE GREAT PROVINCE OF ÇARDANDAN. When one sets out from the province of Caragian he goes riding by sunseting [54c] five days journeys. Then one finds a province which is called Çardandan, where they are idolaters and are subject to the great Kaan. The capital city of this province is called Uncian. The people of that province all have teeth of gold, that is that each tooth is covered with a thin plate of gold. For they make a shape of gold very cunningly made in the likeness of all their teeth, and cover the lower teeth as well as those above, so that all their teeth seem to be of gold, and it stays there always. And the men do this and not the ladies.¹ And the men are all knights after their usage, and do nothing in the world except to go to war and to go hunting and hawking. The ladies stay at home and do everything which is necessary for the household,

¹ & ce font les homes & nes les dames Most texts seem to agree in making nes the same as ne or non, so for example FA,FB,TA,VA,LT,L,V,VL; but P: viri et mulieres VB: si mascholi come femene R: gli buomini, & le donne Z omits the sentence. R inserts at this point a shortened form of the account of tattooing which F,Z, etc. give under Caugigu (p. 296 below).

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